

STATE OF ARKANSAS



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For Immediate Release
July 20, 2012

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Governor's Workforce Cabinet Announces Microsoft IT Academy Program

LITTLE ROCK--- The Governor's Workforce Cabinet today announces the formal launch of the Microsoft IT Academy program. The Microsoft IT Academy includes Web-based instruction and opportunities to earn industry-recognized certifications, including Microsoft Office Specialist, Microsoft Technology Associate or Microsoft Certified Professional. Topics range from computer basics to high-level programming, along with information and communications technology management.

In the first year, the Microsoft IT Academy will be a pilot program in approximately 20 Arkansas high schools, 24 adult education centers and 25 Arkansas Workforce Centers, with the expectation that more high-school sites will be added during the first year. It is planned that all public high schools and adult education centers will eventually offer the program. Arkansas is the first state in the nation to offer the Microsoft IT Academy to adult learners, who can access services at adult education centers and Arkansas Workforce Centers.

"We're very excited about bringing the Microsoft IT Academy to Arkansas," said William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr., Director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education, the lead agency for the initiative. "For students and workers alike, technological literacy is essential to compete in today's economy. The Microsoft IT Academy program will play a significant role in preparing a technologically savvy workforce for our 21st-century global economy."

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Arkansas's Microsoft IT Academy is funded jointly by the Department of Career Education, the Department of Education and the Department of Workforce Services. The state's investment of \$469,635 provides a variety of curricula, lab resources, teacher training and certification materials for an anticipated 343 sites.

With the implementation of the Microsoft IT Academy, adult Arkansans who are not students will also be able to participate and acquire skills to enhance their employability. Adult education centers offer basic academic classes, GED® preparation and testing for adults without a high-school diploma. Workforce Centers serve jobseekers through services such as job training, assistance with job-seeking skills and referrals.

“Within the next decade, we expect that more than three-quarters of all jobs will require technology skills,” said Artee Williams, Director of the Department of Workforce Services and Chair of the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet. “With this program, both students and adults will have access to the skills and certifications they need to improve their career opportunities and earning potential.”

Arkansas's Microsoft IT Academy is customized to align with the state's STEM Works program, also an initiative of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet. STEM Works is aimed at educating more K-12 students in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and equipping Arkansas colleges with the tools needed to better educate future K-12 teachers in these core subjects.

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet includes the Governor's Office, the Department of Career Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority and the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges.

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